

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /072 W
-----061129 170729Z /20
P 170543Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1870

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJ: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: AQUINO APPEALS TO MARCOS FOR RELEASE

REF: MANILA 2568

1. SUMMARY. ON FEBRUARY 16 BENIGNO AQUINO DESPATCHED A PERSONAL LETTER TO PRESIDENT MARCOS REQUESTING TEMPORARY RELEASE DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN. MANILA PRESS FEBRUARY 17 CARRIED EXCERPTS OF AQUINO LETTER (WHICH HAS BEEN HANDED OUT AT OPPOSITIONIST PRESS CONFERENCE PREVIOUS DAY) AND REPORTED MARCOS AS SAYING THAT THE AQUINO REQUEST WOULD BE TAKEN UP TODAY BY THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. IN HIS LETTER AQUINO CITES AND REITERATES AN EARLIER (FEBRUARY 11) REQUEST FOR RELEASE WHICH HE MADE TO DND UNDERSECRETARY BARBERO. AQUINO NOTES HIS WILLINGNESS TO ABIDE BY SECURITY REGULATIONS AND EVEN TO CAMPAIGN IN HAND-CUFFS AND LEG CHAINS, PROVIDED "I AM ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO OUR PEOPLE". HE ADDS HIS WILLINGNESS TO POST BOND AND GIVES SOLEMN WORD NOT TO TRY TO ESCAPE. HE RECALLS EXAMPLE OF THE RELEASE OF MORARJI DESAI TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIAN ELECTIONS LAST YEAR AND EXPRESSES THE HOPE THAT THE SUBSEQUENT INDIAN EXPERIENCE DID NOT INFLUENCE THE RECENT NSC DECISION TO DENY DETAINEES' REQUEST FOR
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RELEASE IN CONNECTION WITH ELECTION CAMPAIGN. FULL TEXT OF AQUINO LETTER (PROVIDED TO US BY SENATOR SALONGA) FOLLOWS. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN TEXT. PRES. FERDINAND E. MARCOS, MALACANANG.
SIR: I HAVE JUST FILED MY CERTIFICATE OF CANDIDACY FOR THE FORTHCOMING INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA ELECTIONS FOR

THE METRO MANILA REGION. I HAVE JOINED A GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED CITIZENS UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF FORMER SEN. LORENZO M. TANADA WHO ARE OPPOSED TO MARTIAL LAW AND ONE MAN RULE AND WHO WILL PRESENT A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT OF THE NATION, THROUGH THE METRO MANILA ELECTORATE, DURING THE CAMPAIGNS.

I HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY YOUR REPEATED INVITATIONS TO THE LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY TO JOIN IN THIS ELECTORAL "EXPERIMENT", THE FIRST SINCE YOU IMPOSED MARTIAL RULE AND WHICH YOU PROMISED, IF SUCCESSFUL, WOULD HASTEN NORMALCY.

LAST SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1978 IN DIFFUN, QUIRINO, YOUR OWN DEFENSE SECRETARY, JUAN PONCE ENRILE SAID THAT THE RELUCTANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATION CRITICS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS IS A "MAJOR HINDRANCE TO NATIONAL UNITY AND SOLIDARITY."

THE TIMES JOURNAL QUOTED SECRETARY ENRILE TO HAVE SAID ON THE SAME OCCASION: "IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR EVERYBODY TO UNITE, PARTICIPATE AND INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THIS HISTORICAL ENTERPRISE."

LAST SATURDAY MORNING (FEBRUARY 11) I CONTACTED DEFENSE UNDERSECRETARY CARMELO BARBERO WITH THE PERMISSION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF MY MILITARY CUSTODIAN BY TELEPHONE AND REQUESTED HIM TO ASK YOU TO RELEASE ME TEMPORARILY SO I CAN CAMPAIGN.

I WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE WHAT I TOLD UNDER-SECRETARY BARBERO:

1. IN SEEKING FOR MY TEMPORARY RELEASE, I AM WILLING TO ABIDE BY ANY SECURITY REGULATION THAT MAY BE IMPOSED;

2. THAT I AM EVEN WILLING TO CAMPAIGN IN HAND-CUFFS, AND IF THIS IS NOT ENOUGH, I AM EVEN WILLING TO WEAR LEG CHAINS SIMILAR TO THOSE USED BY MY FELLOW DE-TAINEES, PROVIDED I AM ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO OUR PEOPLE;

3. THAT I AM READY AND WILLING TO POST ANY REASONABLE AMOUNT OF BOND TO GUARANTEE MY RETURN TO MY DETENTION CELL IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LEGALLY PRESCRIBED CAMPAIGN PERIOD;

4. I GIVE YOU MY SOLEMN WORD, I SHALL NOT EVEN TRY TO ESCAPE.

A YEAR AGO TODAY, IN A SIMILAR SITUATION IN INDIA, THEN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI STUNNED HER NATION WHEN SHE SUDDENLY CALLED FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE MIDST OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY (MARTIAL RULE). MORARJI DESAI, 80, THE LEADER OF THE OLD CONGRESS PARTY AND AN IMPLACABLE FOE OF MRS. GANDHI SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF RELEASED FROM JAIL A FEW HOURS BEFORE THE ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT. A FEW DAYS AFTER THE UNEXPECTED SPEECH, MRS. GANDHI FORMALLY ENDED DOMESTIC PRESS CENSORSHIP AND ORDERED ALL STATE GOVERNMENTS TO RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS. (TIME MAGAZINE, JAN. 31, 1977)

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THIS MORNING, ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPERS, THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING IN MALACANANG HAS DENIED THE REQUEST OF DETAINEES SEEKING TEMPORARY RELEASE TO CAMPAIGN IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, AN ACTION DIRECTLY IN CONTRAST TO THE INDIAN PRECEDENT. I HOPE THE SUBSEQUENT INDIAN EXPERIENCE DID NOT IN ANY WAY INFLUENCE THE NSC DECISION.

I AM THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY IN THIS COUNTRY. I HAVE BEEN ELECTED MAYOR, VICE-GOVERNOR, GOVERNOR AND SENATOR OF THE REPUBLIC. I AM A DETERMINED CANDIDATE AND IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT I HOPE YOU WILL VIEW MY REQUEST IN A MORE REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE.

I AM NOT ASKING FOR ANY SPECIAL PRIVILEGES OR CONVENIENCES. AS I SAID, I AM WILLING TO SUBMIT TO ANY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS PROVIDED MY FREEDOM OF SPEECH

IS NOT IMPAIRED.

YOUR OWN 1973 CONSTITUTION PROVIDES: ART. XII,
SEC. 9 (1) "BONA FIDE CANDIDATES FOR ANY PUBLIC OFFICE
SHALL BE FREE FROM ANY FORM OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION."

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ALL I ASK IS THAT I BE GIVEN THE SAME RIGHTS AS ANY
OTHER BONA FIDE CANDIDATE AND I AM EVEN WILLING TO HAVE
THOSE RIGHTS DILUTED BY SECURITY REGULATIONS OF MY MILI-
TARY CUSTODIANS.

YOU HAVE ORDERED ME HELD IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AND
I HAVE SUFFERED IN SILENCE FOR THE LAST FIVE AND A
HALF YEARS. YOU HAVE LIMITED MY CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE
WORLD TO THE IMMEDIATE MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY AND MY
LAWYERS. PLEASE GIVE ME THIS ONE CHANCE TO TALK TO OUR
PEOPLE ONCE MORE--IN THIS FIRST ELECTION SINCE THE IMPOSITION
OF MARTIAL RULE--IN THE NAME OF SIMPLE FAIR PLAY AND
JUSTICE.

YOU HAVE ALREADY DRIVEN MY PARTY TO NON-PARTICIPATION
BY YOUR INSISTENCE ON BLOC VOTING WHICH WAS OBLITERATED
FROM OUR ELECTION CODES EVEN BY THE OLD SOCIETY WHICH YOU
HAVE REPEATEDLY BRANDED AS DECADENT AND CORRUPT. I
HAVE DECIDED TO RISK ALL AND HAVE ACCEPTED YOUR INVITATION
TO PARTICIPATE KNOWING FULLY WELL THAT THE ELECTORAL DECK
IS STACKED AGAINST THE OPPOSITION. AND IN SPITE OF YOUR
INSISTENCE OF BLOC VOTING WHICH OCCUPIES THE MOST
IGNOMINIOUS PAGE IN OUR POLITICAL HISTORY, I HAVE
DARED TO ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE. WITH ALL THESE, WILL
YOU STILL INSIST THAT I FIGHT YOU, AND THE FORCES OF
GOVERNMENT BEHIND YOU FROM THE SOLITARY LONELINESS OF MY
CELL?

PLEASE RECONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE NATIONAL
SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH MUST HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE BELIEF
THAT IS WHAT YOU DESIRED. SINCERELY YOUR, BENIGNO S.
AQUINO, JR. END TEXT.
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